

21 February 1957

MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

25X1A8a

ATTENTION : [REDACTED]

25X1A9a

SUBJECT :

Evaluation of Spanish Translation of
Propaganda Material

DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGE IN CLASS ☒
☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS 8 0 20 11
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE: 1/14/87 REVIEWER: 001100

1. We have reviewed the draft translations of three Spanish language propaganda pamphlets, Los Frentes Populares Comunistas, Polonia - Resistencia y Fermento, and La Revolucion Hungara, which were prepared and edited by the Labor Research Institute. On the whole they appear to be written in accurate, careful Spanish. Our main criticism is that they are very literal translations rather than idiomatic ones. They obviously were prepared from English-language texts, for the tone and expression are more in the style of English than Spanish writings. In fact, it appears that they may have been translated by someone whose native language is not Spanish or possibly by a native Spanish-speaking person who felt it his duty to be literal and precise rather than idiomatic and natural. The vocabulary is often stilted, and the sentences on the whole are long and involved, creating a complicated story lacking in vitality. The result is a ponderous style which often obscures the message. On the whole the articles are lacking in dynamism and probably would have a limited appeal to Latin American readers.

2. The cartoons accompanying the text suffer from the same lack of dynamism. They appear to be imitations of the Soviet style of cartoon but lack the force of the Russian models. The result is a heavy-handed attempt at humor or cynicism which we believe would be quite unconvincing to Latin Americans.

3. For purposes of comparison which you may find helpful we are attaching loan copies of some propaganda pamphlets prepared for Latin American audiences by the USSR and by the Peron government of Argentina. You will note that in all cases the material is presented in clear, short sentences which effectively convey the message. The flowing and direct style would capture and hold the reader's attention. Some of the pamphlets make use of photographs rather than drawings, thereby presenting a more convincing concept. While the Ilya Ehrenburg book does not use illustrations with the text, it presents a dramatic montage on the cover.

4. It will be noted that the Ehrenburg book was translated, revised, and published by Latin Americans in Uruguay. The style of writing and the choice of words is so idiomatic it seems possible that the translator tried to reproduce the thought content of each paragraph rather than present a word-for-word replica of the author's expression. This latter technique, if followed by the Labor Research Institute, would probably result in more effective translations from English.

5. As of possible interest to you, we cite the observations of the Chairman of the Board of one of the largest public relations and advertising firms in the US. His firm has a number of affiliates in Latin America. After visiting there last year, he stated that in virtually all of the countries that he visited, local public relations and press people expressed the opinion that Communist propaganda is more favorably received than is news about the US and its activities (25X1A2g 28 December 1956). Most of the publicity in Latin American papers about the US, he was told, has a financial angle. For instance, there will be an item about a trade delegation from the US which has come to Latin America to drum up business, or a note that an individual from the Export-Import Bank is in Latin America to survey economic needs. In contrast, he stated, Communist propaganda items in the Latin American press deal mainly with cultural subjects. Press accounts discuss visiting Soviet athletic teams, concert groups, ballet groups and other cultural missions sent out from Moscow. His informants concluded that as a result of the non-financial tone of Soviet propaganda, Latin Americans are inclined to believe that the USSR is less mercenary than the US.

6. As a final comment regarding the three pamphlets submitted to us, we wonder whether the target group was analyzed beforehand as that should make a difference in the approach. For example, are the pamphlets designed to influence workers already tending to favor the USSR and change their minds, or are they to supply leaders with good arguments for use in discussions? It seems to us that propaganda material should always be considered in the light of quotability and showability in discussions in order to help persons friendly towards the US position to defend that position or convince others of the validity of that position.

Attachments:
As stated above

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Distribution:

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